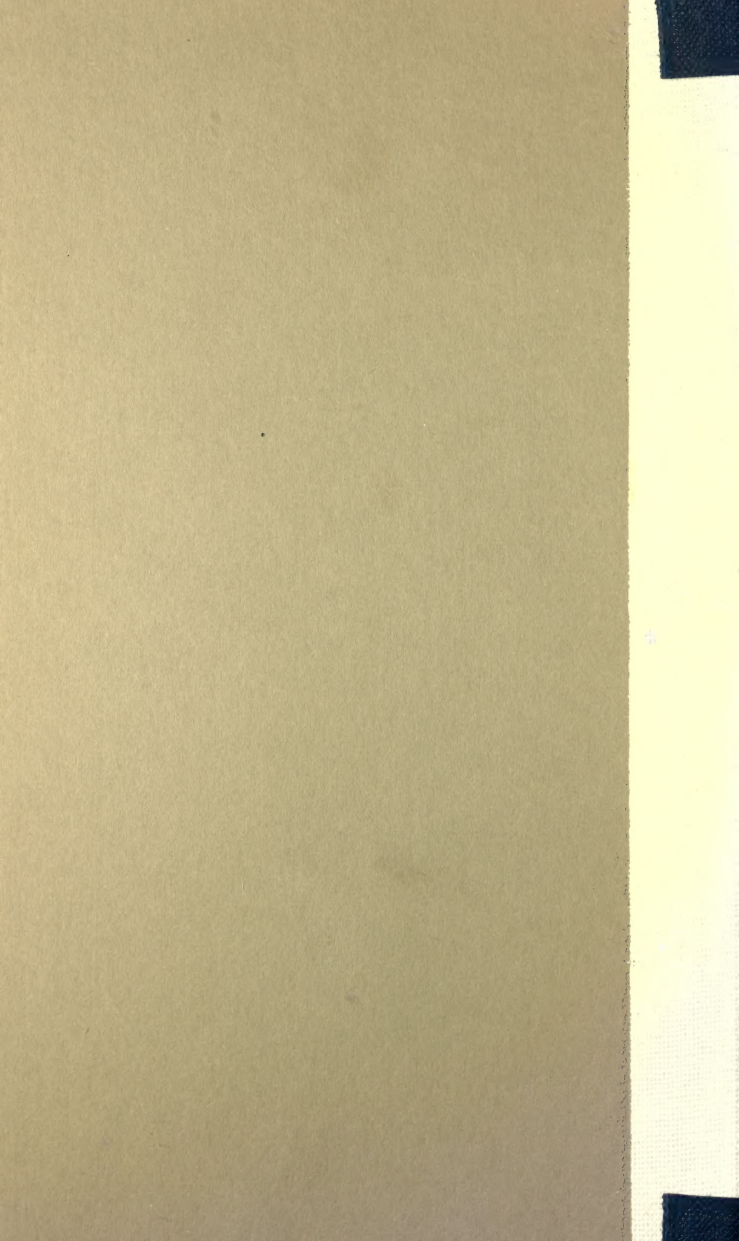




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THOUGHTS ON THE WAR

BY
A. CLUTTON-BROCK



*FROM THE TIMES
LITERARY SUPPLEMENT*

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has been officially translated and read
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PREFACE

OF these articles, the Prelude appeared in the *Times* on August 6th, the others in the Literary Supplement. I have to thank the proprietors of the *Times* for allowing me to reprint them. They are reprinted just as they were first published except for a few corrections. Some objection has been made by correspondents to the article called "The Illusions of War," on the ground that it is dispiriting and mawkish. I wrote it as a sermon for myself and my own more violent feelings. Christianity tells us to love our enemies. I cannot pretend that I have succeeded in doing so ; but that article and passages in the other articles are attempts to attain to a state of mind in which the Christian command shall not seem a foolish impossibility ; and they are not, I think, inconsistent with a belief that we are fighting for a good cause.

A. CLUTTON-BROCK

October 29, 1914.

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THOUGHTS ON THE WAR

PRELUDE

SUNDAY BEFORE THE WAR

ON Sunday, in a remote valley in the West of England, where the people are few and scattered and placid, there was no more sign among them than among the quiet hills of the anxiety that holds the world. They had no news and seemed to want none. The postmaster had been ordered to stay all day in his little post-office, and that was something unusual that interested them, but only because it affected the postmaster.

It rained in the morning, but the afternoon was clear and glorious and shining, with all the distances revealed far into the heart of Wales and to the high ridges of the Welsh mountains. The cottages

of that valley are not gathered into villages, but two or three together or lonely among their fruit-trees on the hillside ; and the cottagers, who are always courteous and friendly, said a word or two as one went by, but just what they would have said on any other day and without any question about the war. Indeed, they seemed to know, or to wish to know, as little about that as the earth itself, which, beautiful there at any time, seemed that afternoon to wear an extreme and pathetic beauty. That country, more than any other in England, has the secret of peace. It is not wild, though it looks into the wildness of Wales ; but all its cultivation, its orchards and hopyards and fields of golden wheat, seem to have the beauty of time upon them, as if men there had long lived happily on the earth with no desire for change or fear of decay. It is not the sad beauty of a past cut off from the present, but a mellowness that the present inherits from the past ; and in this mellowness all the hillside seems a garden to the spacious farmhouses and the little cottages, each led up to by its own narrow, flowery lane. There the meadows are all lawns with the lustrous green of

spring even in August, and often overshadowed by old fruit-trees—cherry, or apple, or pear; and on Sunday after the rain there was an April glory and freshness added to the quiet of the later summer.

Nowhere and never in the world can there have been a deeper peace; and the bells from the little red church down by the river seemed to be the music of it, as the song of birds is the music of spring. There one saw how beautiful the life of man can be, and how men by the innocent labours of many generations can give to the earth a beauty it has never known in its wildness. And all this peace, one knew, was threatened; and the threat came into one's mind as if it were a soundless message from over the great eastward plain; and with it the beauty seemed unsubstantial and strange, as if it were sinking away into the past, as if it were only a memory of childhood.

So it is always when the mind is troubled among happy things, and then one almost wishes they could share one's troubles and become more real with it. It seemed on that Sunday that a golden age had lasted till yesterday, and that the

earth had still to learn the news of its ending. And this change had come, not by the will of God, not even by the will of man, but because some few men far away were afraid to be open and generous with each other. There was a power in their hands so great that it frightened them. There was a spring that they knew they must not touch, and, like mischievous and nervous children, they had touched it at last, and now all the world was to suffer for their mischief.

So the next morning one saw a reservist in his uniform saying good-bye to his wife and children at his cottage gate and then walking up the hill that leads out of the valley with a cheerful smile still on his face. There was the first open sign of trouble, a very little one, and he made the least of it; and, after all, this valley is very far from any possible war, and its harvest and its vintage of cider and perry will surely be gathered in peace.

But what happiness can there be in that peace, or what security in the mind of man, when the madness of war is let loose in so many other valleys? Here there is a beauty inherited from the past, and added

to the earth by man's will ; but the men here are of the same nature and subject to the same madness as those who are gathering to fight on the frontiers. We are all men with the same power of making and destroying, with the same divine foresight mocked by the same animal blindness. We ourselves may not be in fault to-day, but it is human beings in no way different from us who are doing what we abhor and what they abhor even while they do it. There is a fate, coming from the beast in our own past, that the present man in us has not yet mastered ; and for the moment that fate seems a malignity in the nature of the universe that mocks us even in the beauty of these lonely hills. But it is not so, for we are not separate and indifferent like the beasts ; and if one nation for the moment forgets our common humanity and its future, then another must take over that sacred charge and guard it without hatred or fear until the madness is passed. May that be our task now, so that we may wage war only for the future peace of the world and with the lasting courage that needs no stimulant of hate.

I

THE TWO KINDS OF COURAGE

NOW that war is upon us all the virtues seem to be lost or concentrated in the one virtue of courage, for that alone can defend all that the others have given to us. There has come a time when men must be ready to give their lives for what makes life worth living, to sacrifice themselves for a future in which they will have no part ; and the readiness to do that is the supreme virtue without which all the others avail nothing.

But because it is now supreme we are tempted to separate it from all the other virtues, as if we were suddenly thrown back into a primitive state in which it superseded them all. And yet this courage that is required of us now has been changed—and how has it been changed?—from the daring of the savage who snatches a piece of meat from another. We say

that it is disciplined courage. But discipline alone cannot give us the courage we need, for discipline may be only a kind of fear, a habit that will make men face death sooner than the anger of their leaders, as the savage will face death sooner than hunger. Discipline alone will turn a number of men into a single instrument, but an instrument without a will or conscience of its own that may be broken like a piece of lifeless steel, unless to the courage of discipline is added the courage of will and conscience, of men who fight for what their own souls value and are ready to die so that that may endure. The instrument made by discipline may be, and often has been, used for evil purposes, so that its courage is a vice rather than a virtue in its effects, and to be admired only as we admire the strength and swiftness of a beast of prey. And this is a fact that needs to be remembered more urgently in war even than in peace, so that in the stress of war we may not forget why we fight, so that our natures may not be subdued to what they work in.

We have one word for all kinds of courage; and there is a strong animal quality common to all of them and

never to be despised. It is our inheritance from a past in which men fought, each one for himself, that they might survive; and it remains with us still, to be put to other uses. For now the courage of a man who fights only for himself is cowardice. He fights for fear lest he should not survive; and there is some cowardice in a nation that fights only for itself and its material advantage. There is some, we believe, in the "blood and iron" policy of Germany; for that policy means a want of faith, and lack of faith is always the result of fear. Faith and courage go together, and the higher the faith the higher the courage. Where there is courage without a high faith, as there often is, it cannot survive disaster. If you fight for some material gain alone, the fear of failure, when once it begins to steal upon you, is the primitive, unalloyed fear. For you there is nothing beyond failure. But when failure itself is glorious and an example to the world, neither a man nor a nation fears it even in its certainty. They fight for something beyond their own survival, for that which endures through all the generations of men and the rise and fall of temporal powers; and

it may be said of them, as the poet said of Toussaint l'Ouverture :—

There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee ; thou hast great allies ;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

But this kind of courage, as it cannot exist except in a nation that has a spiritual treasure of its own to guard, cannot persist unless that nation remembers its own spiritual treasure through all the bitterness of war. There is always a danger that those who are drawn into a war through love of what they would preserve will persist in it through hatred of what they would destroy ; that the higher courage will give way to the lower ; that the necessary discipline may kill the soul of the instrument it forges. That was the fate of the heroic armies of the French Revolution ; and it must not be the fate of any of our armies or nations in this war. We must have the courage, and maintain it, not to hate the Germans, however much we suffer at their hands ; for hatred is the stimulant that men employ to drive away fear, and it is one that the civilian is tempted to use more than the

soldier. Soldiers in the field are too busy to hate, as sick nurses are too busy to be anxious. It is the civilian, waiting and fretting at home, who thinks of his wrongs and mistakes his anger for patriotism.

So all of us civilians, for whom there are no supreme moments of daring or sacrifice, can constantly and quietly keep our courage at the higher level. Not only must we perform our plain and simple duty by refraining from all kinds of panic such as storing food, spreading rumours, or whispering doubts of our leaders ; but we can also, each of us, do something for the soul of England, that, when peace comes again, it may be a treasure unimpaired. We, as a nation, have certain virtues of our own, easier to practise in peace than in war, but more sublime in war than in peace. We are just and kindly and long-suffering. When we are at peace we have a contempt, partly moral and partly intellectual, for national vendettas and all the false romanticism that springs from them. Let us keep that contempt still, and still smile at the baser and more fearful part of ourselves that would persuade us to hatred. Let us remember that if, at the end of this war,

England has a national feud, she will not be the England that all the world is now cheering on to battle. It is because we fight for no national feud that we are applauded, because we have gone to war sadly and without any drunkenness of spirit, like a man who kisses his wife and children at the gate. And we should remember that many Germans have kissed their wives and children so in the last week; and if to them in their misled ignorance England is a wicked abstraction thirsty for the blood of their own innocent abstraction, Germany, then there is all the more reason why we should not share their error and so fall into their national guilt. Let us remember always that there is no abstract Germany, however much the Germans may sing about her, but only a number of Germans, most of them kindly people like ourselves, but cursed by this national romanticism, with a fear at the heart of all its courage, that is a perverted survival from their righteous struggle with Napoleon. The world has changed since then, but they will not believe it. They are marching to war with all their old courage, but it is for us to convince them that it is as obsolete

as the wrongs which inspired it ; and that we must do not only by victory but by the spirit in which we win it. We must prove to them that now the courage can prevail which is without hate or fear, that nations can fight and win with open eyes and open minds, never telling themselves lies to hearten them for victory, never proposing to themselves the reward of a triumph that shall make peace only another preparation for war.

As this war continues there will be many to warn us that it cannot be won in such a spirit, that we must, like the Germans, blind ourselves if we are to beat them. But their warnings will be the warnings of fear, not courage, for they will fear that courage cannot be sustained by truth. Does any one now believe that the Berliners showed courage in their outrages upon the Russian Ambassador and the English Embassy? They were working themselves up into a frenzy of hatred because they doubted in their hearts that their cause was just. It was necessary to them to believe that their enemies were villains, and they could best attain to that belief by treating them as if they were villains. We all know that state of mind

in private quarrels, and we know that in them it is neither wise nor brave. And what is true of private quarrels is true of war. Our adversaries are not villains, and they will not always be our adversaries. It is probable that even their statesmen who made this war were most foolish when they thought themselves most wise, that they were led astray by false doctrine rather than by any national wickedness. The worst of it is that false doctrine does more harm in the world than any villainy, and that there comes a time when it must be withstood with arms. But that is the time when those who withstand it are most open to the contagion of it. It was easy enough for us not to fall under the German illusions while we were at peace with them, but now we shall only escape them if we remember always that we are fighting against them rather than against the Germans. The England that we fight for is an ideal that we help to destroy by every vain or savage thought of our own, and she would not be worth fighting for if she herself became savage in the course of the war. In that case her victory would be the defeat of all that was best in her, and the peace she made would never have

the consent of the vanquished. She might show courage, but it would be a courage estranged from all the other virtues and made almost animal by that estrangement. That kind of courage is obsolete in our civilization, and we are going to war to prove that it is obsolete. So when the war is over we shall say to all the ideals that provoked it and to the misguided hosts that fought for those ideals :—

Honour not hate we give you, love not fear,
 Last prophets of past kind, who fill the dome
 Of great dead Gods with wrath and wail, nor hear
 Time's word and man's—"Go honoured hence, go
 home,
 Night's childless children ; here your hour is done ;
 Pass with the stars, and leave us with the sun."

II

ON THE NATIONAL CONSCIENCE

IT is a saying as old as the time of Cleon, and older, that a nation cannot have, and ought not to have, a conscience like an individual ; that if it behaves to other nations as men of conscience behave to each other it does so only out of self-interest. The first duty of a nation, we are told, is to itself ; and that is where it differs from individuals, whose first duty is not to themselves.

Now if we judge this doctrine by its results it may be said that we are still accepting self-interest as the last test ; if the Germans have set the world against them by their conduct, it is not because they put national self-interest above everything, but because they have been clumsy in pursuit of it. It was not really to their interest to force war or to violate neutrality as they have done ; and sooner or later

they will pay, not for their lack of conscience but for their stupidity.

This argument, that enlightened self-interest is the same thing as virtue, can be, and often has been, applied to individuals as well as to nations. And the answer to it is the same in both cases. It is that self-interest does not give enlightenment and that conscience does. The man, and the nation, that always acts from enlightened self-interest and simulates all the symptoms of virtue by doing so, is a mere figment of the philosophers. Such a man, such a nation, does not exist and never has existed. Experience has proved that in the past, as it is proving it at the present moment ; and, apart from experience, there are plain reasons why it should be so. For, if it is contrary to self-interest to outrage the common conscience of mankind, that common conscience must exist before self-interest can be aware of it. It is a fact that self-interest has to take account of and not one which it has produced. And for that reason self-interest does not understand it so well as it understands itself. Once assume that it is the business of self-interest to obey the common conscience of mankind, and you

will see that self-interest is less capable of obeying it than that conscience is capable of obeying itself. For the more virtuous a man is the more instinctive is his obedience ; and the more he is controlled by self-interest the more artificial his obedience becomes. And this is more true of nations even than of individuals. For the individual, however selfish, is subject to a pressure of public opinion so constant that his obedience to the common conscience may become habitual. But a nation, especially if powerful, is not subject to the same constant pressure and does not acquire the same habit. It may win successes by its want of scruple and may be admired for them by other nations, both because our ideas about national morality are still confused and because its successes prove that its citizens have fine personal qualities. So we in England admired the Germans for their successes in 1870, which did prove the bravery and discipline and self-sacrifice of individual Germans ; and we, and perhaps the Germans themselves, were not fully aware of the character of the national policy that lay behind those successes. But with them grew in Germany,

and not in Germany alone, the doctrine that a nation can only be patriotic if it has no national conscience, that the individual has a duty to his country beyond which there is no duty to mankind. This doctrine has been preached everywhere, but it has been nationally accepted only by the Germans with their peculiar docility, and only they have thought it right to surrender their individual consciences to their Government. Elsewhere, if a Government has behaved unscrupulously, it has been bitterly criticized by its own citizens, and, whatever its own theories may have been, it has had to pay some attention to the moral scruples of the people. But in Germany the doctrine, preached even by intellectuals, is that the moral duty of Germans is only to Germany, and that Germany herself is non-moral. And this doctrine has been applauded in other countries, by people who were not intellectuals, as the expression of a clear, un sentimental patriotism.

Well, it might be that, if the result were enlightened self-interest in the German Government. But what is the result? The Germans are powerful, but because of their personal virtues, not

because of their national doctrine. And now that they have put their personal virtues at the service of their national doctrine whither is it leading them? They still have their power, but they are wasting it in a war which they themselves have provoked and against an alliance which nothing but their own want of scruple could have made. And behind this alliance is the sympathy of all the civilized world. Even the Germans cannot believe that it is the wisdom of their Government which has aroused this alliance against them, and what they do believe, no doubt, is that we are all leagued together in a treacherous conspiracy.

But a policy of self-interest must be judged by its results ; and if the result of the German policy is a treacherous conspiracy of all the other nations against Germany, there must be something wrong with that policy. The national aim was to be supreme through fear ; yet they have not been able to intimidate Belgium, and she is fighting against them as fearlessly as if she were fighting against Holland. Even if they win in this war, they will have set themselves the hardest of all possible tasks

—and a task, too, that will never end. For the world will not rest under their supremacy any more than it would rest under the supremacy of Napoleon ; since Germany, like Napoleon, has outraged the conscience of the world, and it is her doctrine of national self-interest that has led her into that supreme stupidity.

That is the lesson for us of this war ; and it is one that we must never forget, whether we win or lose. It may have seemed to us, in our want of faith, that the German self-interest was enlightened in 1870. But her very success in that war only made her ultimate stupidity the more complete. She has resolved to be a Power governed by enlightened self-interest, and a power not of this world has deprived her of enlightenment. It is with nations as with men—they can will to be good but not to be clever ; and if they will be clever at all costs they will be stupid just when and where they most need cleverness. And this is being proved, if it needs proving, by Germany at the present moment.

Let us be thankful that Germany is proving it and not we ourselves, but do not, therefore, let us be self-righteous.

The false doctrine has been preached often enough in England, and sometimes acted upon. But we have not surrendered our consciences up to it or made our Government free of moral criticism. There are, as the Germans would say, many unpatriotic sentimentalists among us, many who would have England as good as a good man ; and it is just because their doctrine is now prevailing among us that we go to war as a unanimous nation. For if we were thinking of national self-interest we, with our habit of doubting and criticizing the Government, should all be asking whether it might not profit us better to remain neutral, whether we might not be supreme in Europe when both sides had fought themselves to exhaustion. But that is a question which we have not suffered ourselves to ask, whatever the answer to it might be. Nor must we ask ourselves any question like it in the course of the war. For us now all these ambitions of national supremacy have disappeared ; we are fighting against the very notion of national supremacy, against the idea that the peoples of Europe are like snakes in a bottle, each struggling blindly to be above the rest. Germany

is now our enemy because she, with all the weapons that civilization has given to her, is fighting for that barbaric notion, because with all her detailed intelligence she is subject to one dark and obsolete superstition that oppresses her with a general stupidity. It is against that stupidity that we make war; and from first to last we must remember that.

Our victory would profit the world nothing, in the long run it would profit us nothing, if it meant only that Europe was to exchange the fear of one supremacy for the fear of another. Then, in a few years, we and our Allies should be quarrelling over the spoils like dogs over a bone, and as the half-savage nations of the Balkans quarrelled. Then the world would see that we were banded together only through fear of Germany, and not for the hope of the world. There are many people who in time of war become impatient of ideas, as if while we were fighting we had no leisure to think. But when we are fighting is the very time when we must never cease to remember what we are fighting for. War for every civilized nation is only a means to an

end, and if we do not always bear that in mind the end itself will change without our knowing it. Our Allies at present are more hotly engaged than we are. Compared with the French and the Belgians, we are almost non-combatants, for all their energy of mind and body is, as it were, thrown upon their frontiers, and they can think of nothing but their wrestle of life and death. Therefore, while we give them all the material help we can, we have also the spiritual duty of non-combatants, to keep our minds calm and clear and our national conscience as steadfast as if we were at peace. It is not our merit that imposes this high duty upon us, but our good fortune ; and therefore, if we failed in it, we should be unfaithful just where faith is most required of us. We, of all the league of civilization, have now the most power to be disinterested. For the moment the conscience of the world is in our keeping, and it is the greatest treasure that our Fleet has to guard. And while our sailors are watching for us at sea and our soldiers are joining, or training themselves to join, our Allies, there remains the great body of the nation, in whom the national

conscience must preserve itself high and pure, so that, when the war is over, it may be the conscience of the world.

III

THOUGHTS IN ADVERSITY

(Written after the Fall of Namur)

WHEN we exaggerate our successes we set our minds travelling in one direction with an illusory and excessive momentum ; and this, when it is suddenly checked by the news of failure, throws us into an intellectual and emotional bewilderment, during which all the intellectual and emotional vices are apt to flourish. Many of us undoubtedly exaggerated the first successes of the Allies. We thought they meant more than they did mean, not merely in their effect upon the campaign, but also in the light they were supposed to throw upon the state of the German Army. We began to believe that the German organization, by a kind of Divine justice, was no better than the German national conscience. We

did not understand that the German national conscience was bad partly because it had surrendered itself to this matter of organization, because the German sense of duty, always very strong, saw nothing beyond the need to make Germany the most complete fighting machine in the world. It is clear to every one that the national sense of duty, thus perverted, had brought stupidity into the German diplomacy, and therefore we hoped and believed that it had also brought stupidity into the German military machine and that the Divine justice was going to work as precisely and immediately on this earth as if it were heaven. But the Divine justice, as we all ought to know, does not work thus on earth. If it did, the German intelligence would never have permitted the present perversion of the German sense of duty. It is because it does immediately pay to turn a nation into a wonderful fighting machine that the German sense of duty has been able to lower itself to that task, that the German conscience has been able to take for an end what is really, at best, only a means. If a nation, by thinking and acting like a nest of marauding ants, did not attain to the excellence that

it aims at, it would not be tempted to aim at it. The temptation is strong because the excellence can be attained to, and it is clear now, as it ought to have been clear from the first, that the Germans have attained to it. That is the fact we have to face, putting away from ourselves our first illusion that perhaps it was no longer a fact.

If we are to have a real faith in the Divine justice, we must not expect it to be our ally on earthly battlefields; we must not hope to see the laws of God fighting for us, as the Great Twin-Brethren fought for the Romans at the battle of Lake Regillus. For the essence of faith is that it does not look for payment here on earth. When Cromwell said, "Trust in God and keep your powder dry," he meant that God would not keep your powder dry for you, and, further, that He would not damp the powder of an unrighteous enemy. Faith is only pure and sound when the faithful are ready to face failure for it, and it only pays, in this world, when they are enduring just because they do not expect it to pay. The Battle of Marathon would not have the glory that it has—a glory that still

shines upon us as if from a victory of our own—if the Greeks had gone into the field sure that they would win because the future of the world was in their hands. They must have believed that all the odds were against them, and there have been many Marathons in history that were defeats no less glorious. Faith and courage only exist because the future is always uncertain, and the faith and courage that are based upon an illusion of certainty are themselves illusions and turn to panic at the first touch of failure.

The Germans, no doubt, are expecting that this will happen now to us and our Allies. Their whole method of war is based upon that expectation. Since they have, nationally, forgone the higher faith, they believe that it does not exist. They will sacrifice everything, including their national conscience, to strike a shattering blow, because they are sure that their first great success will intimidate us all as if we, too, were nests of ants fighting for our nests and nothing else. But it is here that we must disappoint them, and we can only do so if we make up our minds to the fact that, since they have sacrificed everything to this power of

striking a shattering blow, they are likely to have the power. They have struck, and the blow has been less rapid and terrible than they hoped or we might have expected, and for that we may be thankful. But now that their power is disclosed to us comes the time when we must exercise that counter-power in which they have no belief. It falls upon our Allies to exercise it more than upon ourselves, and we must, therefore, have faith in them just as much as in our cause. At first, perhaps, we thought that they could do more than they could do. At first we were tempted to believe that the high French and Belgian spirit must mean immediate success, and for that very reason there is a danger lest we should think that we have been deceived in that spirit when we have been only telling ourselves what we wished to be true. A high spirit and a righteous cause, even if combined with all material efficiency, do not ensure success in war ; for they do not ensure that the enemy, however unrighteous his cause, is inferior in spirit or efficiency, or, above all, in numbers. And if we start by believing that they do ensure success, we are likely, when failure comes,

to believe that the efficiency, if not the spirit, is wanting. Even if we do not despond about ourselves, we are likely to despond about our Allies, and that despondency is the most dangerous and the basest that we can fall into. But these are warnings that every one of us must give to himself rather than to others. If we have, in the first weeks of the war, indulged ourselves in the lower faith that we must win because we are right, now is the time for us to recover the higher faith that we must disregard defeat because we are right. And we must keep that faith, not because we hope to win by means of it, but because it is the only faith worth having and fighting for.

The French now are fighting for their national existence. We know what manner of nation they are, and we know that they have been preparing for this struggle for years. We may be sure, therefore, that their past preparations and their present war are worthy of them ; and our business is to make our own war worthy of us, without pride in ourselves or misgivings about our Allies. We must foster no legend about the superiority of our own troops, for this is a war in which

the allied nations are lost in the common cause and in which rivalry would mean treachery to it. On the field of battle there are no longer Englishmen or Frenchmen at all. There is only Europe, with all the best of its past and future, fighting against a heresy that the Germans have inherited from the Tartars of Asia. And they, because they are Europeans, have given to that heresy a new power and glory by enriching it with the European intelligence and the European sense of duty. These things they have inherited from the higher European labours of the past, and, though they may misuse them, they still possess them. They are fighting against Europe, but with the strength of Europe, with some part even of its moral strength. And Europe itself, thus forced into a civil war against its own heretics, has no material superiority over them because they are heretics. The Germans, though they have the diplomacy of Attila, do not make war with Tartar caprice and inconstancy. Their machine, like all machines, is the product of long-exercised and self-denying intelligence, even while it has no more conscience than any other machine. Whatever they do, good or bad, whether they

lay down their lives for their country or exact a ransom from a neutral capital, has a purpose in it, and we can only defeat them with the same steady purpose, and with a machine inferior to theirs and yet superior because it has a conscience in it. In so far as our machine is inferior to theirs, that is the material penalty we pay, and the French with us, because neither of us has ever been able to think of a nation as a fighting machine and nothing more. Just as the man who gives all his energy to growing rich does grow richer than the man who has some sense of higher things, so the nation that gives all its energy to material power is more powerful than the nation that has a sense of higher things. And the nation, like the man, may exercise many of the virtues in pursuit of the lower aim. That the Germans have done and are doing. They have learned devotion, even if they are mistaken in its object. It may be an idol that they worship ; but they will sacrifice to it as if it were the true God. And the true God does not now reveal Himself in fire from heaven to the confusion of the priests of Baal. " It is the way of Heaven not to speak ; yet it knows

how to obtain an answer." That is the truth about the universe as we know it, and it is for us now to make the answer of faith to this silence of a Heaven that faith alone tells us is not indifferent. And that answer now is one of deeds not words, but of deeds made constant by the faith that is behind them. It is for us not to expect failure or success, not to be cast down or puffed up by the winds of fortune, but to remember always that the cause is greater than the fortunes of those who fight for it. We believe, and with reason, that we must win in the end; but our victory would be worth nothing to the world if we had only fought because of that belief. We must fight as if all the odds were against us and there were nothing but the cause to make us fight, if we are to keep our souls worthy of the cause to the end.

IV

MEN AND MARIONETTES

As the Germans came into view in the open in front of our hastily dug trenches, our men opened on them with a steady fire that never once went wide, and we could see clean-cut gaps in the tightly packed ranks. They were a game lot, however, and kept closing up the gaps as if they were so many marionettes. . . . Then they halted for a few minutes, gazed about them in a dazed sort of way, and ran like hares. Their place was taken by another bluish-grey mass behind them, and this body came on in much the same way, until they too had had as much as they could stand.

WHEN you read this you feel that it is not only a conflict of different tactics, but also of different national ideas. There is the German docility both in their manner of fighting and in the multitudes of them that submit to war at their Kaiser's word of command. This docility deserves praise and gets it in the soldier's words which we have quoted ; but after the praise

comes the instinctive English reaction from it: "They were a game lot, and kept closing up the gaps as if they were so many marionettes." We are not a military nation, and for that very reason we have a contempt for soldiers who behave like marionettes. We can admire their disregard of death, but they seem to have won it at too great a price—at the price, indeed, of their humanity. And so even now we can admire the German nation for all those things in which it excels, and we must continue to admire it and what it has done, if we are not to be made stupid ourselves by the stupidities of war. But we know now, while we admire, that the nation has paid too great a price for all its successes, and that, if it wins a last success now, the price will be ruinous. For a nation, like a man, can lose its soul; and it can lose it in discipline as well as in love of money or pleasure.

Every one now is talking of the crime of Germany; and we wonder how far the Germans as a people are to be judged for the misdeeds of their rulers. To condemn them all as villains is both absurd and dangerous; but if they have a national vice that makes them accom-

plices, it is their national virtue of docility. Protestants are apt to sneer at the Catholic for surrendering his conscience to his priest ; and the German in politics has done what the Catholic is said to do in religion. But while the Catholic has some right to think of his Church as an absolute here on earth, while it is no metaphor to him but a fact reaching from earth to the heaven of its origin, Germany, in the German national conception, is only a metaphor dangerously mistaken for a fact. We may talk of the State as a body, with its rulers for brain and with all its other classes as limbs and organs obedient to the brain ; but when we do that we are using a metaphor as an argument, we are assuming what we want to prove. The State is not naturally and inevitably a body of this kind, nor does it naturally and inevitably tend to be one. According to our English conception, whether conscious or unconscious, it neither is nor tends to be that ; and the docility that would make it that is to us not a political virtue but a political vice.

We may be tempted to adopt the German conception because it is much

more easily realized and much more clearly defined than ours, and because, when realized, it pays. But before we adopt it we ought at least to know the case against it, and that case is at this moment presenting itself with a ghastly clearness in the very successes of Germany. The marionettes may outnumber us in the field, but they could not fight for such a cause if they were not marionettes ; and it is because we, and the French too, are not marionettes that we are fighting against them. You cannot eat your cake and have it. You cannot make a national machine out of free men conscious of their immortal souls, such as you can make out of men who are content to be parts of a machine ; and to envy the machine and its mechanical superiority is to lose faith in the spirit.

The Germans are obedient ; and obedience may be a spiritual virtue, but only if you still keep a will beyond the will to obey. The vice of the German obedience, and its terrible power, is that there is no will in it beyond the will to obey. And because that is so the Germans have now forgotten to ask themselves what it is that they are obeying, and why. To

go to war is an act that demands the extreme of consciousness in a nation ; but the Germans—that is, the great mass of them—have done it as if by instinct or habit ; and in battle, too, they are fighting, and their whole system of discipline trains them to fight, as if by instinct or habit. We cannot fight so, because we cannot go to war so, or in any respect conduct ourselves as a nation so. We have not achieved their national unity, because every Englishman is to himself and to all other Englishmen something besides an item in the nation, and because for that very reason our conception of national unity is something vaguer and farther away and more difficult of attainment. We all know at this moment that we believe in fellowship, which is life as the lack of it is death, although in times of quiet and routine we may have forgotten that belief. But the fellowship we long for is one in which men shall be themselves as well as fellows to each other, in which each shall know his own desire, and there shall be a harmony among them because of a holy concord in their desires. But what holiness, indeed what desire, is there in this

present concord of the Germans? They have trained themselves for it for years, and in doing so they have trained themselves out of it; and now the machine is working, and all the world is appalled because it seems to be composed of men, of creatures that live and die like men, and yet there is no humanity in it, but only momentum that must be checked at any cost of human life.

It is well, no doubt, to be angry over the ruins of Louvain; but in our anger we must still try to understand the causes of that crime and the state of mind, if it can be called a state of mind, which produced it. The German by himself is not a brutal ruffian, but when he becomes part of the German machine it is only his primitive instincts that have the will to assert themselves. All the best of him is converted into obedience, and it will obey any one who commands, whatever the command may be. But detach him and his sense of duty from the machine—make him, for instance, a prisoner who can no longer obey a German officer because there is none to be obeyed—and he becomes often a simple, kindly human being, ready to talk of his wife and

children and grateful for any kindness from his captors. And the German officer in the same case, having no longer any one to command, becomes a gentleman who sees that his enemies are only enemies by convention, and does not even wonder to find that they are as good as himself. He has his sense of duty, and that is a fine thing ; but how strangely is it perverted when a man must be released from it before he can recover his humanity !

This German ideal of the machine is a new thing, as the Germans are a new nation. It has been tested only by forty years of national success, and what is that in the life of a great people? But we are an old nation, and our older ideal has been long tested, and not least when we have forgotten it. It is vague for us, and we can blame ourselves that we have not made it clearer ; for an ideal only becomes clear through pursuit of it, and when men weary of it, it fades. But now at least the German ideal, pursued so ardently, has a glaring clearness ; and every one in Europe can see what it is, except the Germans themselves. They are blinded by the glare of it, but for how

long? Now they see themselves as the guardians of a great treasure of the past against the Cossack hordes. But we, and all the free men of Europe, know that for the sake of guarding the treasure they have destroyed it. There are the ruins of Louvain to prove it, and sooner or later that proof will convince the Germans themselves. The machine was made for an ideal, but the ideal was forgotten in the machine ; and that is the price which every man and every nation must pay for a too great docility. Because we had not that docility they said in their pride that we were a worn-out people. Now they have met us face to face, and that illusion is gone. We do not despise their marionettes, and they cannot despise our men. But, while nothing can teach us to become marionettes, it may be that disaster will teach them to become men again ; and, if once they learn that, the German peril will be over, and we and all the world shall welcome them back into the fellowship of Europe. But before that can happen the machine must be destroyed so that the men of which it is made may come to life ; and this must be done without anger or desire for

revenge, for it is not reasonable to be angry with marionettes : rather we should pity them for the awakening that must be theirs when they do come to life and discover not only what the world thinks of them, but what they think of themselves.

V

WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

WHAT is it that we are fighting for? Most of us say, Freedom for ourselves and Europe ; but there is something beyond freedom, something that makes freedom worth fighting for ; and this war will not be all an evil if we learn from it more clearly what that something is. It will be an evil, even though we win it, if in the heat and strain of it we can think of nothing but victory, if we forget how we want to live and think and feel when we are at peace.

There is, for nations as for men, an everlasting orthodoxy of doctrine that becomes clearer as they live by it ; but when it is despised and neglected it grows faint and confused in its very outlines, so that they do not know what it is they despise and neglect. And this orthodoxy is always being threatened by heresies, as old as

itself but always changing, because the circumstances and temptations that produce them differ and change from time to time. The doctrine is both difficult and simple—difficult to practise both for men and for nations, and simple only to those who do practise it. As the Chinese philosopher said, true virtue seems paradoxical at first, yet in the end it exhibits complete conformity with Nature. But it only does that when it is practised. To the heretic it remains paradoxical; and he calls it sentimental, unpractical, unpatriotic, or whatever term of abuse is suggested to him by his particular heresy.

Now the essence of the orthodox doctrine, both for men and for nations, is that they should not ask themselves whether they are superior or inferior in any respect to others, but that they should have their own idea of excellence and pursue that without rivalry or envy or contempt. There are some who will admit this in the case of men, but not of nations. The nation, they would say, must ask itself whether it is superior or inferior in strength to other nations, because it may have to fight with them, and it must strive to make itself superior to a possible enemy,

so that it may continue to exist as a nation. That is true, and every one can see the truth of it now. But it is a duty imposed upon the nation by the struggle for existence, not one that the nation exists to perform, still less one that should become an ideal to it. Indeed, we are fighting the Germans now because this duty, as we think and as they seem to prove by their actions, has become an ideal to them, because the image of Germany in their minds is an image in shining armour, a war goddess as their lord is a war lord, happy only in victory and ill at ease and full of fears in peace. The Germans themselves—that is, the Germans who are governed and do not govern—tell us that they have made this war out of fear. But that a nation so strong should rush into war from panic is a proof that its whole mind is possessed by these thoughts of superiority and inferiority, that it is eager to measure itself with all possible enemies, and that out of this eagerness has arisen fear in spite of all its armoured strength. So the fear, because it is acted upon, has become just. Germany now is indeed threatened by a circle of enemies, and nothing at the moment can save her but

her superiority in arms. That is so because in peace she made this superiority her ideal and made the war in which it becomes the supreme end.

There is the lesson for us which we have to learn without self-righteousness, and which, if we learn it, will make more clear to us that doctrine for which we have to fight. And the doctrine, in its origin lofty and mystical, becomes, when it is practised, plain common sense. For neither men nor nations can attain to excellence except by pursuing their own idea of it. If we are stirred to effort by rivalry with others, it is their ideas of excellence that possess us; and if men or nations are mere rivals of each other, they are possessed only by the idea of rivalry and not by any idea of excellence at all. The very notion of rivalry is in its essence absurd, for men and nations can attain to excellence only according to the limits of their own nature and capacities; and these limits also define their notion of excellence. The French notion is not the same as the English, nor the English the same as the German. This does not mean that there is no absolute excellence, or that all our ideas of it are merely the result

of physical circumstances, but only that, because of our limitations, we—all of us, men and nations—have our own peculiar relation to that absolute, and can have no other relation to it. Our business is to discover what is the best we can do, and that, not by comparing ourselves with others, by exulting where we surpass them or by envying where we fall short, but by knowing our own strength and weakness in relation to our own ideal. Indeed, the comparison we have to make is with our own ideal, not with other existing men or nations; and, so far as our souls are concerned, it does not matter to us whether we are superior or inferior to them in any respect; it matters only whether we are doing our best to reach our own ideal.

In that effort men and nations alike would neither hate themselves nor love themselves, but only forget themselves and all comparisons with others; and when comparisons were forced on them by the struggle for life they would not suffer them to trouble the peace of their souls with pride or envy or hate. And so a nation possessed by the high orthodox doctrine would be able to make even war with-

out hatred ; and yet it would make war resolutely so that it might the sooner return to peace and the pursuit of its own proper business. We hope and believe that we are making war so ; but we must ever be on our guard against the danger lest this national rivalry, forced upon us, become a rivalry also of our minds, lest we think of victory as a heaven beyond which we need not aspire. Victory is glorious in proportion to the value of the cause that triumphs in it. If Xerxes had conquered at Salamis his victory would have seemed glorious only to himself ; and ours will be dust and ashes if we lower ourselves to win it so far that, when it is won, it means to us only that we have shown ourselves better men than the Germans. There are some among us now who preach hatred of the Germans to us ; and in doing that they are trying to make us what they themselves suppose the Germans to be. But England, the best England for which we fight, is a nation trying to be itself and not comparing itself fearfully or vainly with others. If there are other nations that excel us in this capacity or in that, we can confess it without shame. We do not exist as a nation

to excel all others, but to do our best. War is a matter of victories and defeats ; but war is not life, and the man who conceives of all life as a war, and gets joy in it only by surpassing others, has allowed his soul to be subdued to the struggle for life so that the life for which he struggles is worthless.

We in modern Europe have suffered even our peace to be invaded by the ideas of war. We have watched each other fearfully or exultantly over the frontiers. There has been a rivalry, not only in armaments, but in trade, in games, and almost in the arts and sciences. One people has proclaimed the decadence of another as if it were a greedy heir eager for the death of a sick man ; and nations have feared their own decadence as if they were hypochondriacs, who knew that when they died all their possessions would go to an enemy. And so there grew up a notion that peace was only war disguised, and that open war might bring the everlasting conflict to a swifter and plainer issue ; and the Germans rushed into this open war without any sense of guilt, because to them there is no difference between peace and war, except that in war the

struggle is no longer hidden. So, too, they have waged war ruthlessly and without any thought of a future peace, because they expect peace in the future, as in the past, to be only war disguised ; because Germany is always an armed goddess to them, who can be fully divine only when she has overawed the world.

And we, too, have we never been tempted to think of Britannia as a goddess, to fall back into that paganism which once was primitive but now is vulgar? There is no national goddess for a people that is humble in its vision of the true God ; and if we now destroy the German national idol, it must not be to set up an idol of our own in its place. There will be ruin enough after the war to repair, and a heavy task for all the nations in repairing it ; but if they have learned then that peace is not a disguised war but a state of being in which men and nations alike pursue their own ideas of excellence without rivalry, then we shall know that the irrevocable dead have not died in vain.

VI

GERMANY

FORGET for a moment the war and wasted Belgium and the ruins of Reims Cathedral, and think of Germany and all that she means to the mind among the nations of Europe. She means cradle-songs and fairy stories and Christmas in old moonlit towns, and a queer, simple tenderness always childish and musical ; with philosophers who could forget the world in thought like children at play, and musicians who could laugh suddenly like children through all their profundities of sound. The Germans of the past were always children, even when they were old and fat and learned ; and the world loved, while it laughed at, the contrast between their power and their childishness. All other nations had some wickedness in them, but they kept a kind of innocence that made them the musicians

of the world. It was impossible for any other people to produce a Mozart, a genius as high as Michelangelo or Shakespeare, but still a child that one would like to comfort when he cried. These Germans of the past were always spoken of as "the good Germans," and the world admired their innocence and imposed upon it. It was assumed that they would remain poor but honest, leaving all the prizes of the world to other peoples. And then there came a time when they were no longer content to be treated so, and they made Germany into an Empire so that they might be imposed upon no longer. We cannot complain of that, and when we regret the old Germany they tell us that our regrets are both sentimental and interested; they have strong practical reasons for preferring the new.

Well, let us confess that they have a right to the German Empire. They have made it and are proud of it; but what has it made of them? Their task, when they took their place among the strong nations of the world, was to put off their childishness; having given up their innocence, it was necessary for them to learn wisdom. This fact they themselves were aware of.

They gave up their innocence and set to work at once to learn wisdom with all their national industry and docility. But still they tried to learn it, like children, as if it were a lesson that any school-master might teach. Wisdom they believed was the very opposite of innocence; and this new nation they had made must be the very opposite, in all its aims and principles, of the old Germans—the old philosophers who had loved truth, the old musicians who had loved music, the old teachers who had loved learning, each for its own sake. We remember how Mr. Boffin, the Boffin of Dickens's earlier and better intention, resolved to become wise when he became rich, and how he spoiled himself in the process. Well, the Germans now, if only we can have the patience to see it, have spoiled themselves in the same way; and they have some of Mr. Boffin's absurdity even at this moment when they are so terrible. We cannot forgive them now, perhaps, but we can still laugh at them a little; and that is the way to understanding, and so to forgiveness. Any one who had known Mr. Boffin before he was spoiled would have

felt the pity of the change and would have seen that, through the change, he still remained the old Boffin. He had always been unworldly ; and for this reason, when he made up his mind to be a man of the world, he overdid it. And so the Germans, having made up their minds to be a nation of the world, are overdoing it with a German thoroughness. They have, as we have said, tried to learn wisdom like industrious scholars, but, being a people naturally simple, they have chosen the worst possible teachers. They went to the Prussians and said to them, Make us a nation of the world ; and the Prussians, for their own purposes, did their best, or their worst, with them.

Prussia has gained her power over Germany because she is more utterly worldly than any other nation. We and the French have been worldly enough, but we have always known that there was another world. Prussia has never known that—or, rather, the other world for her, if it exists at all, is just the same as this one, except that it is more favourable to Prussia. And the Germans, diffident, wavering, and credulous in matters of the world, have been

overawed by her narrow certainty. They saw that the Prussians, far more stupid than themselves, had gained power ; and they went to Prussia to learn the secret of it. So she taught them that all the German virtues, moral and intellectual, had been wasted hitherto because they had not been used in the service of Germany. German thought, German virtue, German culture must now be all as proudly and consciously German as the German Army, and, like that, must be organized for victory. The Prussians taught this because they did not understand the German virtues ; and the Germans learned it because they were still children and Prussia seemed to them to be grown-up. Any other people would have seen the absurdity of the teaching ; for when the German philosopher tried to think about the universe in the interests of Germany, he became more consciously German, perhaps, but he ceased to be a philosopher. What Nietzsche said of German music was true also of German thought : " It lost its voice for the soul of Europe and sank into a merely national affair." And the Germans know this and pretend to be proud of it. They have sacrificed

what they valued most, and are feverishly determined to value that for which they have sacrificed it. But at the same time they wish to eat their cake and have it. The old disinterested German virtues are gone ; but the new German Empire is to be admired because of them. The spoiled Boffin calls upon mankind to like him still for his kind and simple heart ; and when mankind refuses he says that it is all through envy of his riches.

For many years now the whole German people have been strained, uneasy, and resentful, as if they were maintaining an unnatural attitude and listening suspiciously for the laughter of the world. And it must be confessed that the world has tittered at their awkward heroics, their incessant unspontaneous *hoch-hoching*, the defiant compliments they pay to their Germany—a Germany they seem to value as a new millionaire might value a doubtful and expensive work of art. The world has laughed so at us ; but we are thick-skinned and the Germans are not. To them every titter seemed the proof of a dark conspiracy against them. They could not forget their two frontiers or that Teutonic superiority of theirs against

which the Slavs are incessantly plotting. Feverishly they saw the world filled with a conflict of races, something more inevitable and inveterate than any conflict of nations, and feverishly they prepared for it. Then at last and suddenly they forced the catastrophe ; they had a right, they thought, to choose their own time for what was inevitable ; they had a right to defend themselves by any means. And so the world suddenly discovered how thoroughly they had learned their lesson. As the old Germans would sacrifice everything to philosophy or learning or music, so the new Germans will sacrifice everything to war. They have always been industrious apprentices in arts and sciences, and now they are industrious apprentices in a systematic devilry. The old German conscientiousness remains to them even if the old German conscience is changed. At this spectacle a purely intellectual being from another planet might laugh ; but we see only the horror of it. There is a pedantry in their crimes and in their excuses for them which makes them seem more inhuman than any outburst of brutal impulse.

We have talked of Mr. Boffin, but he

belongs to good-natured romance, and we cannot think of him with bloodstained hands. Yet we need to explain the Germans ; and we cannot do that if we suppose that by a malign miracle the whole nation has suddenly willed evil. Ask them, and they will tell you that they have a right to their theory of war, as they have a right to all their old theories. But the old theories were in the air, and the new one is being practised in Belgium. That makes the fatal difference to us, but not to them. They do not know how dangerous theories are when they favour the interests and impulses and brute instincts of men. Some of their own militarist fanatics have said that they have no political aptitude, and they prove that now in their devotion to a theory of self-preservation which is leaving them without a friend in the civilized world. War, they believe, is war, in all ages a return to barbarism ; but how if the world has reached a stage at which it will not allow any nation to return to barbarism, at which the conscious barbarian is treated as the enemy of the human race? Then he has no chance unless he is stronger than the human race. And the Germans now have

allowed their theory to ride them almost into that desperate pass. They have done what they hoped to do ; they have frightened the world, and it laughs at them no longer. But we feel that Providence has played an ugly trick, as Dickens would have done if he had turned Mr. Boffin into a homicidal maniac. And the worst of it is that the Germans are still of the same nature as their fathers, and will some day return to their right minds. That we have always to remember, and to pity them more even than their victims. That old, childish Germany of the fairy stories and the cradle songs has been, and it will be again ; but the Germans of the future will have memories that no children ought to have.

VII

FRANCE

AMONG all the sorrows of this war there is one joy for us in it : that it has made us brothers with the French as no two nations have ever been brothers before. There has come to us, after ages of conflict, a kind of millennium of friendship, and in that we feel there is a hope for the world that outweighs all our fears, even at the height of the world-wide calamity. There were days and days, during the swift German advance, when we feared that the French armies were no match for the German, that Germany would be conquered on the seas and from her eastern frontier, that after the war France would remain a Power only through the support of her Allies. For that fear we must now ask forgiveness ; but at least we can plead in excuse that it was unselfish and free from all national vanity. If, in

spite of ultimate victory, France had lost her high place among the nations, we should have felt that the victory itself was an irreparable loss for the world. And now we may speak frankly of that fear because, however unfounded it was, it reveals the nature of the friendship between France and England.

That is also revealed in the praise which the French have given to our Army. There is no people can praise as they can ; for they enjoy praising others as much as some nations enjoy praising themselves, and they lose all the reserve of egotism in the pleasure of praising well. But in this case they have praised so generously because there was a great kindness behind their praise, because they, like us, feel that this war means a new brotherhood stronger than all the hatreds it may provoke, a brotherhood not only of war but of the peace that is to come after it. That welcome of English soldiers in the villages of France, with food and wine and flowers, is only a foretaste of what is to be in both countries in a happier time. It is what we have desired in the past of silly wrangles and misunderstandings, and now we know that our desire is fulfilled.

For behind all those misunderstandings, and in spite of the differences of character between us, there was always an understanding which showed itself in the courtesies of Fontenoy and a hundred other battles. When Sir Philip Sidney spoke of France as "that sweet enemy," he made a phrase for the English feeling of centuries to be. We quarrelled bitterly and long, but it was like a man and woman who know that some day their love will be confessed and are angry with each other for the quarrels that delay the confession. We called each other ridiculous, and knew that we were talking nonsense ; indeed, as in all quarrels without real hatred, we made charges against each other that were the opposite of the truth. We said that the French were frivolous, and they said that we were gloomy. Now they see the gaiety of our soldiers, and we see the deep seriousness of all France at this crisis of her fate. She, of all the nations at war, is fighting with the least help from illusion, with the least sense of glory and romance. To her the German invasion is like a pestilence ; to defeat it is merely a necessity of her existence, and in defeating it she is showing the

courage of doctors and nurses, that courage which is farthest removed from animal instinct and most secure from panic reaction. There is no sign in France now of the passionate hopes of the revolutionary wars ; 1870 is between them and her ; she has learned, like no other nation in Europe, the great lesson of defeat, which is not to mix material dreams with spiritual ; she has passed beyond illusions, yet her spirit is as high as if it were drunk with all the illusions of Germany.

And that is why we admire her as we have never admired a nation before. We ourselves are an old and experienced people, who have, we hope, outlived gaudy and dangerous dreams, but we have not been tested like the French, and we do not know whether we or any other nation could endure the test they have endured. It is not merely that they have survived and kept their strength. It is that they have a kind of strength new to nations, such as we see in beautiful women who have endured great sorrows and outlived all the triumphs and passions of their youth, who smile where once they laughed ; and yet they are more beautiful than ever, and seem to live with a pur-

pose that is not only their own, but belongs to the whole of life. So now we feel that France is fighting, not merely for her own honour and her own beautiful country, still less for a triumph over an arrogant rival, but for what she means to all the world, and that now she means far more than ever in the past.

This quarrel, as even the Germans confess, was not made by her. She saw it gathering, and she was as quiet as if she hoped to escape war by submission. The chance of revenge was offered as it had never been offered in forty years, yet she did not stir to grasp it. Her enemy gave every provocation, yet she stayed as still as if she were spiritless ; and all the while she was the proudest nation on the earth, so proud that she did not need to threaten or boast. Then came the first failure, and she took it as if she had expected nothing better. She had to make war in a manner wholly contrary to her nature and genius, and she made it as if patience, not fire, were the main strength of her soul. Yet behind the new patience the old fire persisted, and the *furia francese* was only waiting for its chance. The Germans believe that they have determined all the

conditions of modern war, and, indeed, of all modern competition between the nations, to suit their own national character. It is their age, they think, an age in which the qualities of the old peoples, England and France, are obsolete. They make war, after their own pattern, and we have only to suffer it as long as we can. But France has learned what she needs from Germany so that she may fight the German idea as well as the German armies ; and when the German armies were checked before Paris there was an equal check to the German idea. Then the world, which was holding its breath, knew that the old nations, the old faith and mind and conscience of Europe, were still standing fast, and that science had not utterly betrayed them all to the new barbarism. Twice before, at Tours and in the Catalaunian fields, there has been such a fight upon the soil of France, and now for the third time it is the heavy fate and the glory of France to be the guardian nation. That is not an accident, for France is still the chief treasury of all that these conscious barbarians would destroy. They know that while she stands unbroken there is a spirit in her that will

make their matter seem unlovely to all the world. They know that in her, as in Athens long ago, thought remains passionate and disinterested and free. Their thought is German and exercised for German ends, like their Army ; but hers can forget France in the universe, and for that reason her armies and ours will fight for it as if the universe were at stake. Many forms has that thought taken, passing through disguises and errors, mocking at itself, mocking at the holiest things ; and yet there has always been the holiness of freedom in it. The French blasphemer has never blasphemed against the idea of truth even when he mistook falsehood for it. In the Terror he said there was no God, because he believed there was none, but he never said that France was God so that he might encourage her to conquer the world. Voltaire was an imp of destruction perhaps, but with what a divine lightning of laughter would he have struck the Teutonic Antichrist, and how the everlasting soul of France would have risen in him if he could have seen her most sacred church, the visible sign of her faith and her genius, ruined by the German guns.

Was there ever a stupidity so worthy of his scorn as this attempt to bombard the spirit? For, though the temple is ruined, the faith remains ; and, whatever war the Germans may make upon the glory of the past, it is the glory of the future that France fights for. Whatever wounds she suffers now she is suffering for all mankind ; and now, more than ever before in her history, are those words become true which our poet who loved her gave to her in the Litany of Nations crying to the earth :—

I am she that was thy sign and standard-bearer,
 Thy voice and cry ;
 She that washed thee with her blood and left thee fairer,
 The same am I.
 Are not these the hands that raised thee fallen and fed
 thee,
 These hands defiled ?
 Am not I thy tongue that spake, thine eye that led thee,
 Not I thy child ?

VIII

THE ILLUSIONS OF WAR

IT seemed easy not to hate the Germans when the war began, but it is less easy now that we have borne the strains of war for two months and a half. Not only their deeds but their words also seem outrageous to us. They threaten and boast and tell themselves lies about us, and gloat over the thought of how they would serve England if it were in their power as Belgium is. They remind us of a man who has long nursed a secret hatred, and at last pours it all out in an ugly glut of anger. They have made a formula about us, as they make one for everything, and it is so far from the truth that it seems to us mere naughty perversity, childish except for its pedantry and for the mis-used force that it tries to justify. We know that we are not what the Germans think us, whatever our sins may be. We

know that England is not an abstraction, cold and greedy and treacherous, but a country of people whose virtues we love and whose vices we extenuate because they are our own. But Germany—she seems to us now to speak with one voice as if she were an abstraction, and that voice says always the same venomous things against the abstract England of her evil dream.

But she is not an abstraction, any more than England is. She, too, is a country of men and women who love their own virtues and extenuate their own faults ; and they also hear of the evil things which England says of them, and think that England is pouring out a hatred long nursed and attempting a destruction long planned. What an ugly word “ Germany ” sounds to us now ; yet to them it is a music that sets them marching, and they will suffer and die for it, as we for England. That at least we have in common, as a proof that we are not beasts, but men : the readiness to sacrifice our bodies at the call of our souls ; and mere hatred or the greed of conquest would never spur either Germans or Englishmen to make that sacrifice. Every man

has dignity who is ready to die for a cause, whether it be good or bad, for men will not die for causes that do not seem right to them ; and the Germans, we know, are ready to die in herds and droves, as we put it, for Germany. In that cause they have a humility and obedience which seem to us less than human. They are content to be called fodder for cannon, to be led, or driven, by officers whose pride is as great as their own humility ; and yet each German to himself remains a single human being, with his individual hopes and fears, with a wife and children praying for him at home, with an immortal soul that imposes this hard discipline upon his flesh.

So there is a struggle of flesh against flesh and of all material things against each other ; but what is the nature of the effort of souls behind all these ? One would think, to read the newspapers, that souls, too, were trying to tear and destroy each other with their weapons of thought and speech ; that they had abandoned themselves to war as utterly as if they were bodies and had lost all that freedom of peace without which the soul is only the slave of the flesh. That slavery

is undergone, and welcomed, by a man in a transport of rage. Anger, as Bacon said, is a sensual passion, and in it the spirit lusts, as if it were the flesh, for an evil spiritual triumph, in which, even if it is won, there is no spiritual satisfaction. For souls cannot win victories over each other either of lust or of hatred, as if they were bodies, and any conflict between them is an illusion imposed by some bodily desire. This illusion may be so strong that the combatants lose their humanity for each other. Indeed, we only hate completely those who seem to us no longer men, but examples and incarnations of that which we hate. And so it is now with us when we think of the Germans in terms of Germany, and with them when they think of us in terms of England ; and war imposes this illusion upon the combatants just because all the men of one country are ready to sacrifice themselves for her against another. They, in their self-sacrifice, are more aware than ever of their own souls ; but against them seem to be ranged only bodies, all at the command of a malign abstraction and all uniform in their obedience to it. And so there seems to us to be nothing human

or spiritual in the German invective against us. It is not Germans who speak, but Germany ; and in what they say is expressed everything that we hate in Germany, as if it were not words with thought in them that they uttered, but merely bullets cast in a mould and fired at the minds of their enemy.

And that is what these hostile utterances are on both sides. There is no thought in them, but only the sensual passion of hatred disguising itself as thought, and the more absurd because of its disguise. Monkeys chatter in a rage ; but men try to remember their human reason and pretend to argue, and affect moral indignation or wit or a lofty carelessness ; and all the while they are more ridiculous with their repeated catchwords and phrases than if they were content to chatter like monkeys : ridiculous to a god without pity, but how pitiable to a man who knows that in all men there is a spirit desiring always the freedom of peace. In their rage and hatred he sees the slavery of the spirit even when it persuades itself that it delights in war, even when it seems to itself godlike in its resistance to all the inhuman hosts of evil.

These hosts are not inhuman, whatever evil design has ranged them against us, but men like ourselves to whom we also seem inhuman hosts ; and if some voice from heaven could suddenly speak the truth to us the weapons would drop from our hands and we should laugh in each other's faces until we wept to think of all the dead that could not share the truth with us, and the wounded who could not be cured by it, and the widows and orphans to whom it could not give back their husbands and fathers. For the truth, the ultimate truth, behind all arguments and national conflicts and all the pride of victory and the shame of defeat, is that we are men in whom the spirit is stronger than the flesh, in whom the spirit desires love more than the flesh desires hatred. We have a strange way of showing that now ; but, whatever our own delusions, each nation knows that it is fighting the delusions of the other ; and against them it is necessary for us to fight as if against the hallucinated fury of a madman. Yet the fighting is best done as good soldiers do it who know that their enemies are men, not devils, and who fear them the less because they do not hate.

A little time ago a French paper praised us for our quiet English pride, as being different from the nervous and bloated pride of the Germans. Well, it may be better-mannered, because we are more used to power than they are ; but we shall do well not to be proud of the quality of our pride, and not to rely on it to keep us calm and steadfast and humane. There are times when pride must be appealed to before it will master the lower passions, but humility is always on its guard against them. Pride makes comparisons with other men or other nations—we will not behave as they do because we are Englishmen—but humility compares us with what we should like to be ; it never flatters us to make us good. If now we are to set a standard of behaviour before ourselves, let us imagine the historian of a distant and happier future looking back upon us with full knowledge and judging our conduct and our temper in this time. We should wish him to say of us that we waged war, not only resolutely and successfully, but with a spirit new to the world ; and that, because of that spirit, there came a new kindness and wisdom after the world-wide

calamity. Of that judgment our remote descendants might well be proud, but we can deserve it, not by pride but only by humility. In every age, if men are to advance, there is a harder task set to their spirits ; but if they are filled with pride in their own past they do not see the hard task that is set to them ; and they perform it only if there is a possibility in themselves that makes them humble. The whole world, and we with it, is falling very far short of that possibility now ; and a god without pity, again, might smile at the prayers of each conflicting nation for its own victory, and at the assurance of each, amid the general ruin, that it was fighting for the future of mankind. But if we all could pray to God that He would have mercy upon our foolish little planet there would be some chance of an answer to the prayer, and that we should have mercy upon each other. The way to wisdom and peace is not through contempt of others' follies, but through a knowledge of our own. If we make a romantic legend of the war, seeing in it a conflict of forces and tendencies, of good and evil abstractions, we shall find a heroic excuse for our

basest passions and thoughts. War is made, not by tendencies and forces but by men who, if they only knew what was in each other's hearts, would never make it, and who, if they could feel the sorrows they cause to each other, would ask each other's forgiveness. That is true of the Germans, whatever their infatuation, as it is true of us ; and it is this ultimate truth which, if we would not suffer spiritually more than we suffer materially, we must be careful never to forget.

IX

THE MUSIC OF WAR AND PEACE

WHEN we say that march music stirs the blood, we do it and ourselves an injustice. It stirs something deeper than that in us ; for soldiers on the march, singing as they go, are life itself become music, and it is as if a symphony of Beethoven had turned from art into fact. There we see men still men, but all made one in fellowship, with one impulse sounding in their tramp and in their voices. Yet, though they are men, they are no longer individuals, each thinking of his skin or his stomach, but rather notes of a great tune that are lost in its certainty and singleness of purpose.

So when we see and hear them we wish that all life were a march and all mankind an army with this concord and simplicity of duty ; and that is the reason why nations so often seem to go wild

with delight when war is declared. They feel then that their whole life is lifted and unified by a great common purpose. The nation becomes one, and the city mob, at other times so aimless, so frivolous, so much at odds with itself, lives as if it were marching to music, as if it were itself music. In a moment it escapes from the meaningless routine imposed upon it by the struggle for life, from all the separate little duties that make little conflicts between man and man. There is the enemy massing on the frontier, and here is the nation in one mass and one brotherhood moving against them. The petty strifes of no issue and no import change into one momentous struggle that must be lost or won. History is making itself before men's eyes, and they themselves are a part of it. No wonder, then, that they should give themselves up to a great holiday of the emotions ; and though this may express itself basely, as is the way of mobs, in the wrecking of embassies and the pelting of foreigners, yet it is not all base, and even in Berlin it means something more than hatred or vanity or self-deceiving panic.

But this very rapture of escape from

routine is a sign of failure in life, a proof that the routine is something to be escaped from at all costs. War is the one chance of collective happiness for an aimless society, as love is the one chance of private happiness for an aimless man. In both cases a bodily instinct supplies the impulse and makes both for the moment aware of their souls ; and both sink back into their aimlessness as soon as the impulse is spent and the instinct satisfied. But a man who knows the adventures of the mind and the spirit does not find his soul and lose it again with this single adventure of love ; nor does a society that knows how to live when at peace find its soul and lose it again with the single adventure of war. And here is a lesson for those eager pacifists who try to make us love peace by talking of the folly and the horrors of war. We shall only love peace when we have made it worthy of our love. Until then there will still be a narrow truth in the saying, *Si vis pacem, para bellum*. But that must give way to the greater truth that if you would have peace you must make it finer than war. And there is something to be learned from war, from its discipline and sacrifice and concord, of what peace ought to be.

For instance, there was that letter which a private soldier sent to the father of an officer who was killed in action at Landrecies. "He was a gentleman and a soldier. The last day he was alive we had got a cup of tea in the trenches, and we asked him if he would have a drink. He said, 'No, drink it yourselves ; you are in want of it.' And then, with a smile, he added, 'We have to hold the trenches to-day.'" And the letter ends, "He died doing his duty and like the officer and gentleman he was." We have often heard the words "an officer and a gentleman" used in peace time, and perhaps they seemed to us only a pompous phrase. But in this letter written from the front they are full of meaning. To be a gentleman there is not a class distinction, not a matter of custom, or dialect, or dress, or money. It is to be a leader in whom the led have faith because he makes his duty harder than theirs and thinks of that, not of his superiority. So he can lead them with a smile, "like the officer and gentleman that he is."

But if peace is to make us forget the glory of war, it must be a peace in which the word "gentleman" will keep that full-

ness of meaning ; so that, when it is used of a man, it may give him the joy which it must have given to that father when it was so used of his son. We know what is thought of an officer who is lazy and considers his own comfort in the field ; but a gentleman in peace time can be lazy and consider nothing but his own comfort, and he will still be thought a gentleman and think himself one. No one expects such a man to be a leader because he is rich or has spent many years in learning ; and few would have faith in him if he led. He is tested by nothing except his customs, his dialect, his dress, and his money. The most the poor expect of him is a civil tongue and a careless generosity in trifles ; for these things they call him a gentleman, and often there is an indulgent contempt in their use of the word.

Well, war does us this good at least—that it makes us suddenly aware of the difference between a gentleman at his club and a gentleman in the trenches. Beautiful things happen between officers and men when the British Army is at war, and it brings the tears to our eyes to hear of them. But it is not enough to feel these

fine emotions and because of them to say that war is not all an evil. That is so only if war teaches us how to make a finer peace and one that will cure us of all desire for war—a peace in which gentlemen will prove themselves, as these officers proved themselves, and if they do not they will lose the name of gentlemen. In war, too, there is a chance of great adventures for all men, rich and poor, and the poorest can be a hero. But we must make a peace in which the poorest will have a chance of the adventures of the mind and spirit, and in which all men will know that these are worth more than riches or the respect now given to riches. We know how the French soldiers of the Revolution fought, because it was said that each of them had a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack. In peace our poor ought to be like those armies of the Revolution, with the same sense of purpose in their lives and a great chance before them. Then peace would not be the negative thing it is now, but positive and filled with its own adventures, because of which no one would desire the adventures of war. Order to us now means a state in which the poor demand no more than is

given to them and the rich can enjoy their riches without fear. It should mean an order like that of armies in the field, made by the tie between leaders and led, the tie of a common duty and a common opportunity. It should be the order, not of aimlessness and stagnation, but of purpose and advance. Then war would be merely a distraction from that purpose and a check to that advance, and men would be as impatient of it as if it were a noise breaking in upon music.

We spoke of the adventures of peace, adventures of the mind and spirit. Most men know so little of these that to them the artist, the philosopher, the saint, the man of science, are not adventurers at all. They cannot believe in the exultation of victory where there is no enemy, in the thrill of discovery where there are no material obstacles to overcome. To them, and we cannot wonder at it, work is all part of the struggle for life and of the routine imposed upon men by that struggle; and peace means that routine unbroken and uninspired. They may try to escape from it by gambling, by sport, by debauchery, by all the varieties of what we are pleased to call pleasure, and finally

by war. But there is another escape, possible now to our civilization, with its new command of all the forces of Nature, an escape into the freedom of the mind which art and thought and religion offer to us. But what have we done yet with all our power to make that freedom possible to all? The great mass of men, it is thought, should exercise their moral faculties, for by means of them order is preserved among us, but not their artistic or their intellectual. These are to be exercised only by the well-to-do. Yet how little even they exercise them in proportion to the opportunities given them by leisure and education! How constantly they refuse all the adventures of thought and emotion which the universe and its unfathomed harmonies offer to them! How can we have time for war among ourselves when there is infinity before us to be felt and probed in so short a span of life, when we have the power to create another world of art with all the hopes and desires of men shaping it and sounding through it? If we saw our opportunity, and if it were open to all of us, we should have no time for war, and there would be an end among us of all fictitious distinctions, as there

is in war itself, where the common man is no more thought of as a vulgarian or a fool, but has his part in the music of the march and the glory of his country. So, then, he would have his part in the music of peace and in a glory of victory which meant no shame to any vanquished.

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